



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

# Executive Board

Two hundred and second session

# 202 EX/37

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## RELATIONS WITH NON-GOVERNMENTAL PARTNERS

### SUMMARY

The Director-General submits this document to the Executive Board pursuant to 188 EX/Decision 12 and 190 EX/Decision 36 and in accordance with the Directives concerning UNESCO's partnership with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (36 C/Resolution 108) and the Directives concerning UNESCO's relations with foundations and similar institutions, adopted by the General Conference at its 26th session and amended at its 28th and 29th sessions.

The admission of new NGOs to consultative status, and the admission to or renewal of official relations with foundations, as the case may be, are submitted to the Executive Board for information.

The Director-General also informs the Board of the follow-up to 200 EX/Decision 23 and reports on the NGOs' collective work coordinated by the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee.

This document is to be considered with documents 202 EX/37.INF and 202 EX/37.INF.2.

This item has no administrative or financial implications.

Action expected of the Executive Board: proposed decision in paragraph 28.



## I. INTRODUCTION

1. In accordance with its terms of reference (198 EX/Decision 6.III), the Committee on Non-Governmental Partners (NGP) will meet during the 202nd session of the Executive Board to consider various issues under the item entitled "Relations with non-governmental partners". The Executive Board will consider, in particular, statutory issues relating to the official partnership with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and official relations with foundations. Information is submitted to it on the admission to consultative status of new NGOs, and the admission to or renewal of official relations with foundations, as the case may be. The Director-General also informs the Board of the follow-up to 200 EX/Decision 23, in particular as regards the means for creating further opportunities for qualitative dialogue between Member States and NGOs, and reports on the NGOs' collective work coordinated by the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee, in particular in the framework of the organization of international forums and the International Conference of NGOs (Paris, 12-14 December 2016).

## II. ADMISSIONS AND RENEWAL OF RELATIONS WITH NGOS AND FOUNDATIONS

2. In application of the Directives concerning UNESCO's partnership with NGOs and the Directives concerning UNESCO's relations with foundations and similar institutions, the following points are called to the attention of the Executive Board for information.

### A. Admissions

3. The Executive Board is hereby informed of decisions taken by the Director-General since its 200th session on admissions to official partnership with consultative status with respect to the eight organizations listed below (corresponding fact sheets are provided in Part I of document 202 EX/37.INF):

- Akhil Bhartiya Sanskrutik Sangh (ABSS), India
- CMA – World Committee for Lifelong Learning, France
- Learning for a Sustainable Future (LSF), Canada
- International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (FICAAC), Australia
- *Fédération internationale des véhicules anciens* (FIVA), France
- Linguapax International, Spain
- Saudi Heritage Preservation Society (SHPS), Saudi Arabia
- Swedish Association for Sexuality Education (RFSU), Sweden.

4. The Executive Board is also informed by the Director-General of her decision to establish official relations with the following foundation for a renewable period of six years (the corresponding fact sheet is provided in Part II of document 202 EX/37.INF):

- Al Saad Foundation for Knowledge and Scientific Research, Kuwait.

5. Lastly, the Executive Board is informed by the Director-General of her decision to renew official relations with the seven foundations or similar institutions listed below for a renewable period of six years (corresponding fact sheets are provided in Part III of document 202 EX/37.INF):

- Arab Thought Foundation

- World Association of Children's Friends (AMADE)
- UNESCO Centre of Catalonia
- UNESCO Center of the Basque Country/UNESCO Etxea
- Green Cross International
- Paul Gérin-Lajoie Foundation
- Foundation for UNESCO - Education for Children in Need.

6. During the period under consideration, a total of 45 admission requests were examined and, after a rigorous evaluation process, only eight new NGOs were admitted by the Director-General to official partnership under the Directives. It should also be emphasized that, pursuant to 38 C/Resolution 71 and 200 EX/Decision 31 (which invited the Secretariat to promote greater geographical diversity of the NGO network and the admission of NGOs which actively cooperate with the Organization), all the NGOs admitted to official partnership during this period have already developed cooperation with the Secretariat and/or National Commissions for UNESCO. Four organizations are moreover based in under-represented regions, namely Asia and the Arab States, and one is based in a non-represented country (Sweden).

### **III. FOLLOW-UP TO 200 EX/DECISION 23 OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD: TOWARDS QUALITATIVE DIALOGUE BETWEEN MEMBER STATES AND NGOS**

7. By means of 200 EX/Decision 23, the Executive Board requested “the Director-General, in line with 38 C/Resolution 71, and in close consultation with Member States and the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee, to develop proposals on how to further create opportunities for qualitative dialogue between Member States and NGOs, including within the governing bodies, drawing on best practices in other United Nations agencies and similar institutions, and to present them to it at its 202nd session with a view to transmitting them to the General Conference for consideration at its 39th session”.

8. Pursuant to the aforementioned decision, a mapping of practices in other United Nations agencies and similar institutions was carried out thanks to the human resources support of the Permanent Delegations of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden to UNESCO. The mapping was mostly based on information and documentation available online, the official websites of each of the organizations studied and their basic texts as reported therein as well as, in certain cases, consultations with the concerned organization's secretariat. Five factors were taken into account: the structure of the organization; the formal mandate given to NGOs; the extent of collaboration with civil society; the level of access to governing bodies, and the type and number of NGOs involved in the cooperation.

9. The mapping enabled the identification of five main mechanisms for engagement with NGOs within the United Nations system: accreditation systems; establishment of NGO-liaison units; access to governing bodies; establishment of advisory committees, and consultations. Some practices are found in different iterations in numerous organizations, whereas others are unique to a single entity.

10. Without claiming to be exhaustive, the document summarizes different practices that emerged from the mapping that might be used as a basis for a constructive and substantive dialogue between Member States and NGOs. It should be noted that the aforementioned document focuses only on existing formal accreditation systems and on mechanisms that might be relevant for dialogue between NGOs and Member States. It goes without saying that engagement with NGOs is not necessarily limited to such mechanisms: the organizations studied have all developed, to varying degrees, engagement and operational cooperation with civil society organizations.

11. The study also shows that United Nations entities have similar rules of procedure concerning NGO participation in governing bodies. Most organizations allow for NGOs to participate as observers, and NGOs may speak at the invitation of the Chairperson with the approval of the governing body. In certain cases, NGOs may also circulate written statements with the approval of the Director-General of the organization concerned. Representative examples are the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Human Rights Council, where many NGOs take part in session debates, interactive dialogues, round tables and informal meetings.

12. Within the United Nations system, the organization that seems to grant the widest access to civil society is the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) (see paras. 55 to 57 of document 202 EX/37.INF.2). UNAIDS was the first programme to have formal civil society representation in its governing board (Programme Coordinating Board – PCB, composed of 22 representatives of Member States). In addition to NGO participation as observers, five NGOs, three from developing countries and two from developed countries or countries with economies in transition, represent the perspectives of civil society and contribute to debates and proceedings in the same way as Member States, albeit without the right to vote. UNAIDS also provides training to members of delegations so as to facilitate the participation of civil society.

13. In a different vein, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (see paras. 25 to 27 of document 202 EX/37.INF.2) holds hearings with civil society which are convened by the Trade and Development Board to allow them to express their views on the issues before the Board, and in the framework of the intergovernmental Preparatory Committee for the Quadrennial Conference in order to let NGOs contribute to the process and comment on the pre-Conference negotiating text.

14. Besides governing bodies, many United Nations entities have established civil society advisory committees and/or consultation mechanisms that contribute either on a regular basis or on an ad-hoc basis on specific issues. It should nevertheless be noted that in many cases such committees aim at fostering dialogue with the secretariats rather than with Member States. One example of a permanent NGO advisory committee that contributes to governance is found in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (see paras. 28 and 29 of document 202 EX/37.INF.2): it consists of 15 civil society leaders who meet annually to give advice on UNDP's policies and strategies. Similar practices are found in UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Food Programme (WFP). The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has also institutionalized a committee of affiliate members (including NGOs, intergovernmental organizations and trade bodies), which takes part in the work of the UNWTO on a regular basis, for instance by contributing to the preparation of the organization's general programme of work.

15. It is important to emphasize that the study reports mainly on formal mechanisms outlined in the basic texts of the organizations studied. Accordingly, although the study enabled the identification of some interesting approaches, it is difficult to establish whether these mechanisms are really "best practices" aimed specifically at fostering dialogue between Member States and NGOs. Moreover, the NGP Committee might be the most appropriate place to explore closer dialogue between Member States and NGOs by drawing on current practices in other organizations with respect to the interaction between Member States and NGOs at UNESCO.

16. The following proposals might contribute to closer dialogue between Member States and NGOs, as they offer avenues for thought that warrant further analysis. Two fields of action have been identified with a view to improving dialogue with NGOs:

- (i) Improving informal dialogue with NGOs by making good use of existing mechanisms:

The Secretariat might play a role in developing adapted tools giving Member States easier access to the network of NGO partners. This would involve drawing up exhaustive lists of all NGOs associated with each sector, programme, convention and committee, which could be made available to Member States and would complement the already

existing NGO database. The Secretariat might envisage, as far as available resources permit, establishing ad hoc spaces for dialogue between Member States and NGOs on specific issues within existing mechanisms and/or practices. There are indeed numerous examples in almost all categories of advisory committee and thematic consultations, including, for instance, the Collective Consultation of NGOs on Education 2030, which provides opportunities for exchange with Member States. The International Conference of NGOs would also constitute a key forum for meeting and dialogue.

(ii) Increasing NGO participation in governing bodies:

Dialogue between Member States and NGOs varies within the United Nations system; the study nevertheless showed that it would be useful to consider inclusive participation by NGOs in governing bodies. Interaction mechanisms might be examined the framework of UNESCO's governing bodies, by looking in particular to current practices in other agencies, such as UNCTAD and UNAIDS. In this respect, the Executive Board might consider more active NGO participation in connection with the items on its agenda, so as to enrich reflection and debate thereon. As part of this reflection, the Executive Board might also envisage inviting NGOs with the status of official partners to take an active part on a regular basis in Executive Board sessions (plenary and commission meetings), in addition to the NGP Committee, without voting rights and under the same arrangements as those applicable to intergovernmental organizations.

17. The more active participation of NGOs in the governing bodies will depend on the will of Member States and on the constructive engagement of NGOs with Member States and in the context of UNESCO's action. It will also have to take into account the human and financial constraints on the Organization. Concerning governing bodies in particular, any possible implementation of new initiatives should be the subject of careful consideration and in-depth discussion in the broader context of the present reflection on governance, and in particular the review of the Executive Board's working methods.

#### **IV. WORK OF THE NGO-UNESCO LIAISON COMMITTEE: 2016 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF NGOS AND INTERNATIONAL FORUMS OF NGOS**

18. Since the Board's 200th session, collective action coordinated by the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee has confirmed the revitalization of UNESCO's partnership with NGOs covered in previous reports submitted to the Executive Board.

##### 2016 International Conference of NGOs

19. The International Conference of NGOs, which brings together all of the Organization's NGO partners, is an element of collective cooperation explicitly provided for in the Directives and is held every two years. Organized in close cooperation between the Secretariat and the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee, the 2016 International Conference of NGOs, held from 14 to 16 December 2016, mobilized some 250 participants from 120 partner NGOs, many observers, and an unprecedented number of representatives of Member States, with the special participation of the Chairperson of the NGP Committee, H.E. Mr Darko Tanasković.

20. The theme of the 2016 Conference was "The challenge of the digital revolution for NGOs", and was organized around four subthemes: "The digital revolution and its impact on the diversity of cultural expressions"; "The challenge of access to digital information"; "Does e-learning address challenges of education systems worldwide?"; and "Science and the digital revolution: which ethical implications?".

21. The Conference was also a prime opportunity to set the main lines of collective cooperation for 2017-2018. The NGOs restated their commitment to place their future activities in the context of

the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They also encouraged UNESCO and the Liaison Committee to continue to organize forums in different regions of the world, in particular on questions of relevance to the 2030 Agenda, including climate change, young people, migrants and science.

22. In accordance with the Directives, the 2016 Conference also examined the Director-General's preliminary proposals on document 39 C/5 and, following its deliberations, approved the document entitled "Contribution of the 2016 International Conference of NGOs to the preparation of document 39 C/5", which was transmitted to the Director-General by the Chairperson of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee and submitted to the Executive Board for information at its 201st session (document 201 EX/15.INF).

23. Lastly, the Conference elected Mr Philippe Beaussant (International Council of Organizations for Folklore Festivals and Folk Art – CIOFF) Chairperson of the Liaison Committee, and the following NGOs were elected members of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee for a term of two years: the *Association francophone d'amitié et de liaison* (AFAL) (France); International Federation of Business and Professional Women (BPW International) (Switzerland); China Folklore Photographic Association (China); Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCSVI) (France); Latin American Social Sciences Council (CLACSO) (Argentina); International Council of Associations for Science Education (ICASE) (United States of America); Arab Institute for Human Rights (AIHR) (Tunisia); International Young Catholic Students (IYCS) (France); Observatory of Cultural Policies in Africa (OCPA) (Mozambique), and Soroptimist International (United Kingdom).

#### International forums of NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO

24. The sixth international forum of NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO took place on 3 and 4 November 2016 in Querétaro (Mexico), hosted by the local government of Querétaro, and was the first such forum to take place in Latin America. Over two days, more than 800 participants (170 representatives of 50 NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO, as well as more than 600 local secondary school and university students) took part in lively discussions on the theme "From promoting to building peace with NGOs". The theme was addressed under three aspects: education: a path for lasting peace, the engagement of youth for peace, and culture and sport: tools for peace.

25. As to the seventh international forum of NGOs, it was held in Riyadh (Saudi Arabia) on 3 and 4 May 2017 and was organized in partnership with the MiSK Foundation. "Youth and their Social Impact" was the theme of the seventh forum, the first to be held in the Arab region. The event was attended by some 2,000 participants, including NGO partners of UNESCO and young people from 70 countries.

26. Tackling such matters as digital illiteracy, youth unemployment, destruction of the cultural heritage, climate change and, in particular, the crucial role of young people in developing policies and creating jobs, the Forum called on NGOs, governments and the private sector to strengthen youth initiatives at the local, national and international levels, include young people at all levels of the public and private sectors, and accompany them in developing the skills they need to maximize their social impact and civic engagement, in particular through non-formal and informal learning.

27. The eighth international forum of NGOs is due to take place at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris very probably on 7 and 8 December 2017 and will focus on climate change. Furthermore, two other forums will be held in 2017 and 2018: one on the issue of migrants and the other on science and the use of scientific knowledge.

#### **Proposed draft decision**

28. After examining this document and documents 202 EX/37.INF and 202 EX/37.INF.2, the Executive Board may wish to adopt a decision along the following lines:

The Executive Board,

1. Recalling 29 C/Resolution 64, 188 EX/Decision 12, 36 C/Resolution 108, 190 EX/Decision 36 and 200 EX/Decision 23,
2. Having examined documents 202 EX/37, 202 EX/37.INF and 202 EX/37.INF.2,
3. Takes note with appreciation of the efforts made to make the network of official non-governmental partners more representative both in its geographical diversity and in the status of cooperation between UNESCO and its partners, and urges the Secretariat to continue in this direction;
4. Takes note of the Director-General's decisions relating to:
  - the admission to consultative status of the eight new non-governmental organizations listed in paragraph 3 of document 202 EX/37;
  - the establishment of official relations with the new foundation listed in paragraph 4 of document 202 EX/37;
  - the renewal of official relations with the seven foundations listed in paragraph 5 of document 202 EX/37;
5. Welcomes the scope and the quality of the international forums of NGOs that have taken place under the auspices of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee in cooperation with the Secretariat, and reiterates its invitation to Member States to support the organization of such forums in different regions in order to raise awareness and mobilize civil society organizations around UNESCO's values and priorities both locally and internationally;
6. Considers that effective interaction between Member States and civil society is a key element in ensuring a comprehensive approach to many issues within UNESCO's mandate and amplify the reach of its message;
7. Also considers that the suggestions made in paragraph 16 of document 202 EX/37 concerning the participation of NGOs in Executive Board sessions should be the subject of in-depth examination in the framework of reflection on its working methods, and invites its Chairperson to ensure that the matter is examined in the framework of future work of the Board in this respect.